

A publication for **AvMed** Members



EMBRACE

Summer 2025

**Wellness Visits: The Best
Way to Stay Healthy**

**5 Health Conditions an
Eye Exam can Uncover**

**Can I Lower My Risk of
Breast Cancer?**





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EMBRACE

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Wellness Visits: The Best Way to Stay Healthy



If you're like most people, you probably only think of going to the doctor when you feel sick or if you've been injured. But having routine preventive care visits and taking other practical steps to manage your health are just as important, if not more so, for staying as healthy as you can be. An annual preventive care visit is recommended to ensure your doctor has an ongoing record of your health progress, which makes it easier to spot subtle signs of ailments or disease. Plus, annual visits are helpful touchpoints for your doctor to give you the recommended health screenings and immunizations that can stave off illness. Being proactive about your own health and wellness can help keep serious medical issues and healthcare costs to a minimum.

Caring for Kids with ADHD: It's a Team Effort

There are several behavioral and medical treatment options to manage attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children.

But what works best will depend on the individual child and family, and finding the best combination will require a team effort of parents working closely with others involved in their child's life, including healthcare Providers, therapists, teachers, coaches, and other family members.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has excellent resources to help parents and caregivers of children with ADHD. Here are just a few insights from the CDC to keep in mind when considering an ADHD treatment for your child:

Behavior therapy

Children with ADHD often show behaviors that can be very disruptive, impulsive, or at times, aggressive. ADHD affects not only a child's ability to pay attention or sit still at school, but it also affects relationships with family and other children. Behavior therapy is often recommended as soon as an ADHD diagnosis is made.

The goal of treating a child with ADHD through behavior therapy is to reduce and eliminate these problem behaviors while teaching or strengthening positive ones to replace them.

In addition to teaching the child skills that will continue to benefit them as they grow up, behavior therapy may also include "parent training," which involves training parents to interact differently with their child to elicit desirable behavior and discourage behavior that's causing them trouble.

Therapists and parents can also work with the child's teachers to develop and introduce behavioral interventions in

the classroom to enhance the learning environment for the child, especially for those who attend early childhood programs.

Medications

Several types of medications are approved by the Federal Drug Administration to treat ADHD in children as young as six years of age:

- Stimulants are the best-known and most widely used ADHD medications. Between 70-80% of children with ADHD display fewer ADHD symptoms when taking these fast-acting medications.
- Nonstimulants were approved for the treatment of ADHD in 2003. They do not work as quickly as stimulants, but their effect can last up to 24 hours.

Medications can have side effects, such as decreased appetite or sleep problems, and affect each child differently. One child may respond well to one medication, but not to another. Also, ADHD medications stop working once the child stops taking them.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that healthcare Providers observe and adjust the dose of medication to find the right balance between benefits and side effects. It is important for parents to monitor the impacts they see in their children and share their observations with the Provider to assess if a new medication is warranted altogether. **For these reasons, it is very important for your child to see the prescribing doctor frequently, especially within the first 30 days after a new medication is prescribed. Equally important is for your child to continue to see the prescribing doctor at least two or more times within nine months after starting a medication.**

Send Your Kids Back to School Prepared for a Safe and Healthy Year!



Heading back to school is an exciting time of year for students and families. As students go back to school, it is important that they eat a nutritious diet, stay active, and are up to date on their immunizations for a healthier and safer school year.

Our children spend the vast majority of their day at school, so it's a place that can have a big impact in all aspects of their lives. Schools can help students learn about the importance of eating a more nutritious diet and being more physically active, which can lower the risk of becoming obese and

developing related health problems.

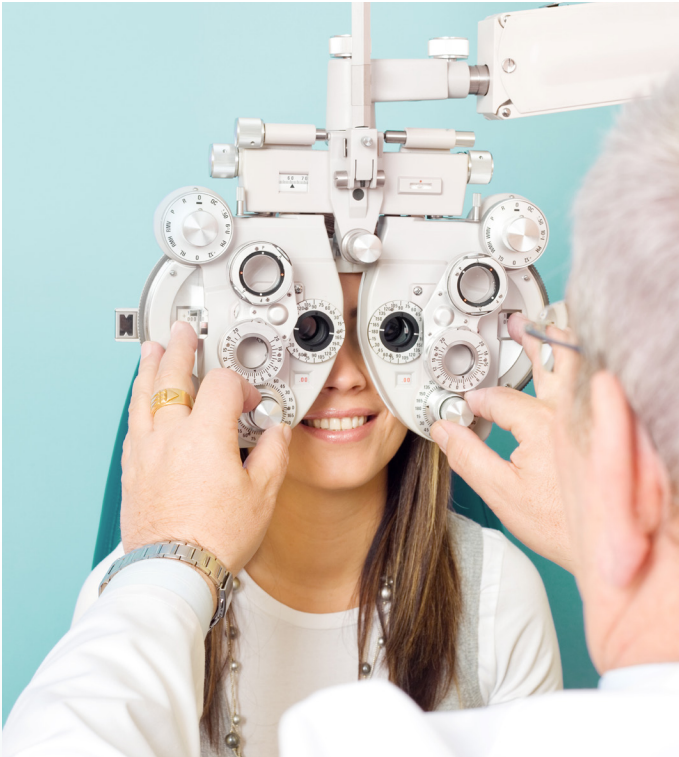
Prevention works. The health of students—what they eat and how much physical activity they get—is linked to their academic success. Early research is also starting to show that nutritionally balanced school lunches may help to lower obesity rates. Health and academics are linked—so time spent for health is also time spent for learning.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and adolescents limit their intake of solid fats, cholesterol, added salt, added sugars, and refined grains. Eating a nutritious breakfast is also associated with improved cognitive function.

Young people aged 6-17 should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Research shows that physical activity can help cognitive skills, attitudes, concentration, attention and improve classroom behavior—so students are ready to learn.

Getting your children and teens ready to go back to school is the perfect time to make sure they are up-to-date with their immunizations. Vaccination protects students from serious diseases—especially in light of recent measles outbreaks—and keeps them healthier and more prepared for success. The recommended immunizations for children birth through 6 years old, as well as the recommended immunizations for preteens and teens 7-18 years old, can be found on the CDC website.

5 Health Conditions an Eye Exam can Uncover



Your eyes are one of the only places in your body that can be examined without an invasive procedure. By looking at the blood vessels, tissues, and nerves in the eyes, optometrists can not only detect vision problems and eye diseases but also spot early signs of other serious health conditions. While optometrists can't diagnose these conditions, what they uncover can help you get ahead of potential problems. Here are five of the most common health issues that an eye exam can reveal.

1. High blood pressure.

High blood pressure (hypertension) is often referred to as a "silent killer," according to the American Heart Association. Many people don't realize that they have a problem because there are no outward symptoms.

During a routine eye checkup, however, an eye doctor has a crystal-clear view of the health of your blood vessels. In fact, the tiny blood vessels of the retina, which is in the back of your eye, are among the first to be affected by high blood pressure.

The eye doctor may see leakage and rupturing that sets off alarm bells. They may also notice twists and kinks in the blood vessels — another warning sign of high blood pressure.

2. Diabetes

Diabetes is another chronic condition that often goes unnoticed in its early stages. High blood sugar levels that aren't lowered or well controlled can damage eye tissue, including the retina and the blood vessels that feed into it. If the problem goes undetected (or untreated) long enough, it can lead to several vision problems, some of which cause vision loss. These include:

- Blurred vision
- Cataracts (a cloudy spot in your field of vision)
- Diabetic macular edema (when fluid collects in the macula, which is the central part of the retina)
- Diabetic retinopathy (when blood vessels leak into the retina)
- Glaucoma (when the optic nerve is damaged)

An optometrist can pick up on the early signs of diabetes and recommend that you see your primary health care provider for testing and treatment. **If you already know you have diabetes, you should still go for an eye exam each year. Your optometrist will check for signs of diabetic retinopathy and assess its progression.**

3.Autoimmune diseases

Inflammation spotted in the eyes or around the eyes can signal the presence of autoimmune diseases such as thyroid disease, lupus, and multiple sclerosis.

Even without the use of equipment, your eye doctor may notice subtle clues that point to an autoimmune condition. Weak, droopy eyelids, for example, could be an early sign of lupus. Enlarged or bulging eyes is a common sign of an overactive thyroid.

4.Cancer

Sores and disfigurations on the eyelid or near the lash line could be a type of skin cancer known as basal cell carcinoma. A change in the color of your eye, dark spots in the back of the eye, or other tiny changes on your iris can sometimes indicate a different type of cancer known as ocular melanoma.

5.Stroke

The eyes are part of the brain, so they can also serve as an early warning system for a stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is cut off or when a blood vessel bursts.

Sometimes, blood flow to the retina is clogged (or a vessel bursts). That is called an eye stroke. The most common symptom is sudden, painless vision loss in one eye.

If your optometrist detects signs of an eye stroke, you'll need immediate testing at a stroke center or with a neurologist. That's because the risk of stroke is highest in the first few days after an eye stroke.

Bottom line: Keep up with your yearly eye exams. These health problems sound

scary, but the important thing to know is that good treatments are available — and early detection is key. If you're behind on your eye exams (or can't remember the last time you were asked to read an eye chart), your next step is simple: Make an appointment. Eye exams are painless, and you'll walk away with peace of mind.





Relief for Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain can strike at any time. You may be at home relaxing, outside exercising or just working at your desk when the pain creeps up on you. While staying at home, people may have an even greater risk of experiencing low back pain due to a more sedentary lifestyle. For acute pain, at-home measures like ice packs and ample rest can help relieve sprains and other minor injuries to the back.

You can discuss your symptoms with a doctor and develop an appropriate treatment plan. Research has shown that conservative treatment approaches have produced better outcomes than more aggressive approaches. For resolving chronic pain, your doctor may first prescribe muscle relaxants or pain medications. If those do not work, your doctor may order X-rays or other screenings for further investigation.

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, best practices are to wait at least six weeks from diagnosis before exposing yourself to an X-ray.

To avoid low back pain, it is important to manage your weight and strengthen your "core". In fact, strong abdominal muscles are very important in supporting your body and avoiding back strain and injury. Proper body mechanics when bending (at the knee, not the waist) and good posture and support while sitting may also help keep your back healthy.



VACCINES ARE NOT JUST FOR KIDS

It's a great time to review your family's vaccinations. This includes the new season's flu vaccine, which usually becomes available by August. All AvMed Members can receive their annual flu shot free of charge at a participating physician's office or pharmacy.

Vaccinations play a crucial role in preventing disease and illness in children. While the kids are on break from

school, it's a good time to talk to your child's pediatrician about upcoming vaccinations to prepare for the upcoming academic year, including human papillomavirus (HPV). In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that all 11- and 12-year-old children get a two-part series of the HPV vaccine at least six months apart.

NEW MOMS: Speak-Up and Be Heard

Bringing a child into the world gives parents tremendous joy. However, it's also a time when new moms experience many first-time feelings. Questions like, "Is this pain normal?" or "What do these symptoms mean?" are common—but what should not be is keeping these concerns to yourself or chalking it up to "just being pregnant."

Championing the CDC's "HEAR HER" campaign, AvMed encourages all our expecting Members to speak up when something seems off. The goal of the "HEAR HER" initiative is to promote open communication between patients and their doctors to eliminate preventable maternal mortality.

By actively sharing how you feel with your Provider during and after pregnancy, you are playing an important role in your care—so that any urgent warning signs are addressed, and medical attention can be provided right away.

While common chronic conditions new moms face include diabetes and depression, one that is particularly important to be vigilant against is preeclampsia. Normally developed To further support our Members, AvMed provides free lactation counseling and support, as well as access to a breast pump at no cost. These benefits are part of our commitment to helping new moms and babies thrive. Whether you're learning how to breastfeed, navigating milk supply challenges, or simply seeking guidance, our lactation services are here to help you feel confident and supported every step of the way.

Bringing life into the world should be met with compassion, support, and trusted care. If you're expecting, take advantage of the resources AvMed offers—and always remember: if something doesn't feel right, say something. We hear you.



Can I Lower My Risk of Breast Cancer?

There's no guaranteed way to prevent breast cancer, but some steps may reduce your risk. While unchangeable factors like being female and aging play a role, others—like lifestyle choices—can be modified.

Screening Recommendations

- Women 50–74 (average risk): Mammogram every 1-2 years
- Women 40–49: Talk to your doctor about when to start and how often

Healthy Habits for All Women

- Maintain a Healthy Weight: Extra weight, especially after menopause, increases risk. Balance calories with physical activity.
- Be Active: Aim for 150–300 minutes of moderate or 75–150 minutes of vigorous activity weekly.
 - Moderate: Brisk walking
 - Vigorous: Running, intense cardio
- Limit Alcohol: Even small amounts raise risk. If you drink, limit to 1 drink/day.

Diet and Supplements

While no specific food or supplement has been proven to reduce breast cancer risk, a healthy diet—rich in fruits, vegetables, and calcium-rich dairy, and low in red/processed meat and sugary drinks—supports overall health and may help prevent other cancers.

For Women at Higher Risk

If you have a strong family history, BRCA1 / BRCA2 mutation, or prior breast conditions (like DCIS or LCIS), consider:

- Genetic Counseling and Testing



- Risk-Reducing Medications: Drugs like tamoxifen, raloxifene, or aromatase inhibitors (postmenopausal) may help, but have side effects
- Close Monitoring: Includes frequent exams, early mammograms, and possibly breast MRI for earlier detection

Talk with your doctor to assess your personal risk and explore prevention and screening options tailored to you.

Chef Patty's Avocado Chicken Salad

Yield: 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch scallions, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 avocados, 1 halved, and 1 chopped
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- ½ cup parsley leaves
- ¼ cup chopped dill
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon cracked black pepper

Instructions:

In a large bowl, toss the chicken, scallions and celery to combine. Gently stir in the chopped avocado and 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice. In a blender, combine the remaining avocado and lemon juice.

Add the olive oil, vinegar, mayonnaise, parsley, and dill. Puree until smooth. Pour the dressing over the chicken mixture and gently toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Enjoy!



Help Us Do Even Better!

It is our top priority to continuously improve your Member experience and benefits to help you stay healthy. In the next few weeks, you may receive an independent survey in the mail from the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) program.

By filling out this survey, we can learn more about your AvMed experience to improve our services and better meet your needs. This tool plays an important role in your healthcare and ensures we continue delivering quality services and the best healthcare experience possible.


We value your opinion. If you receive a letter or call from CAHPS about a survey, we kindly ask that you take a few minutes to participate.

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